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ABSTRACT

This report presents basic information on the Austin Independent School District's (AISD) Cable Channel 8 which began broadcasting in 1982. Information was collected through a review of Cable 8 schedules and 1983 surveys of AISD administrators, teachers, and parents and community members. Channel 8 broadcasts 24 hours a day with about 12 hours of programming plus the AISD chalkboard which displays both school and community information. Four types of programs are offered: instructional, student showcase, staff development, and public information. Survey results indicate Cable 8 is off to a good start. Many people have watched the channel and program quality is considered good. Staff is following program guidelines. Changes should concentrate on: (1) increasing the number of regular viewers; (2) increasing teacher use of the channel for instruction; (3) increasing staff development programming and improving teacher training show quality; and (4) widening the distribution of program schedules. Improving communication of program offerings to all audiences is most important. (BS)

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Project Title: Cable 8

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Current use of AISD's Cable Channel 8 and future directions for use are the focus of this report.

Major Positive Findings:

1. People are tuning in to AISD's Cable Channel 8. Of those surveyed, about 40% of the community members, 50% of AISD parents, 70% of AISD teachers, and 80% of AISD administrators had watched Cable 8 at least once.
2. The quality of Cable 8 programs is considered to be good. Program quality was rated as excellent or good by 69% of the community members, 64% of the parents, 73% of the administrators, and 56% of the teachers.
3. Cable 8 staff is following the program guidelines set for it by the AISD Cable Channel 8 Board of Directors.

Major Findings Requiring Action:

1. Most of the Cable 8 viewers have only watched a few times. About 20% of the community members, AISD parents, and AISD teachers had watched at least once a month; 34% of the administrators had watched at least once a month.
2. The Cable 8 schedule is inadequately distributed. Most (88%) community members had never seen a schedule, and 75% indicated they would be more likely to watch if one were published in the Austin American-Statesman. Sizable groups of teachers and administrators also believed schedule distribution is currently inadequate.
3. Cable 8 programs are not being used for instructional purposes by most teachers. Two thirds of the programs shown are instructional in nature, but only one third of the teachers have ever used Cable 8 for instruction (usually only a few times). Teachers would be more likely to use the channel if:
 - Program schedules matched classroom schedules better.
 - Video-cassette equipment was more readily available to record programs for later use.
 - Each teacher received a program schedule on a weekly basis.
4. Administrators have used Cable 8 for staff development infrequently (an average of two times). Only 8% of Cable 8's program offerings are staff development, and most teachers (76%) rate the quality of training shows as fair or poor.

WHAT IS CABLE 8?

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) was granted use of one cable channel as part of the operating agreement between the City of Austin and Austin Cablevision. A committee of AISD staff (now called the Cable Board of Directors) has provided guidelines for the channel's operation since its inception. AISD's Media Productions Office has been in charge of the operation of the channel. Broadcasting began during the summer of 1982.

During May of 1983, the Board of Trustees asked the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) to collect some basic information about Cable Channel 8. ORE concentrated on:

- Current program offerings;
- Current and potential audiences;
- Ratings of program quality by viewers;
- Suggestions for future programming;
- Adequacy of notice about Cable 8 program offerings.

Information was collected through a review of Cable 8 schedules and surveys of AISD administrators, teachers, and parents as well as community members at large.

WHAT IS OFFERED ON CABLE 8?

The types of programs offered on AISD's Cable Channel 8 basically fall into four categories.

INSTRUCTIONAL: Any program that instructs or trains students in any of the curriculum areas of instruction. The basic academic skills are emphasized (including such areas as reading, math, language arts, health, music, social studies, history, etc.). Programs that encourage students to engage in reading activities and other learning activities plus guidance and counseling programs may also be included.

STUDENT SHOWCASE: A program about AISD student activities or one in which AISD students participated. Examples are dramatic performances, school field trips, athletic activities, student press conferences, science fair or art exhibits, etc.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: Programs that are specifically intended to instruct or train AISD teachers, administrators, or other staff. Programs may discuss or demonstrate new trends and methods for teachers and administrators in the various curriculum areas of instruction and programs for staff members in nonteaching areas. Media Productions develops some shows designed by administrators from other AISD departments.

PUBLIC INFORMATION: Any program which informs or educates the general public, including parents, students, and staff, on matters such as AISD policies, general information about individual AISD schools, or districtwide events. This includes programs that address local, U.S., and world events as well as social, economic, and national educational issues. Programming of interest to particular segments of the community and covering a broad range of topics and viewpoints are included.

After the programming day has ended (around 10:00 p.m.) and at mid-day, announcements and messages are shown through the AISD Chalkboard.

AISD CHALKBOARD: AISD Chalkboard is a display of electronic character-generated messages. Information regarding staff development, instruction, School Board meetings, student activities, school information specifically for the general public, and other school-related information is provided for AISD teachers, administrators, students, and staff, as well as for the Austin community.

Thus, the Cable 8 Channel broadcasts 24 hours a day and offers programming about 11.5 to 12 hours per day. Programming guidelines from the AISD Cable Channel 8 Board of Directors suggest the following schedule for Monday through Friday each week:

9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	Instructional programs (especially elementary language arts from 9:00-10:30 a.m.)
11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	AISD Chalkboard
1:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m.	Instructional programs
4:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m.	Guidance, staff development, homework assistance
6:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.	General education, information, and entertainment programs
10:00 p.m.-9:00 a.m.	AISD Chalkboard

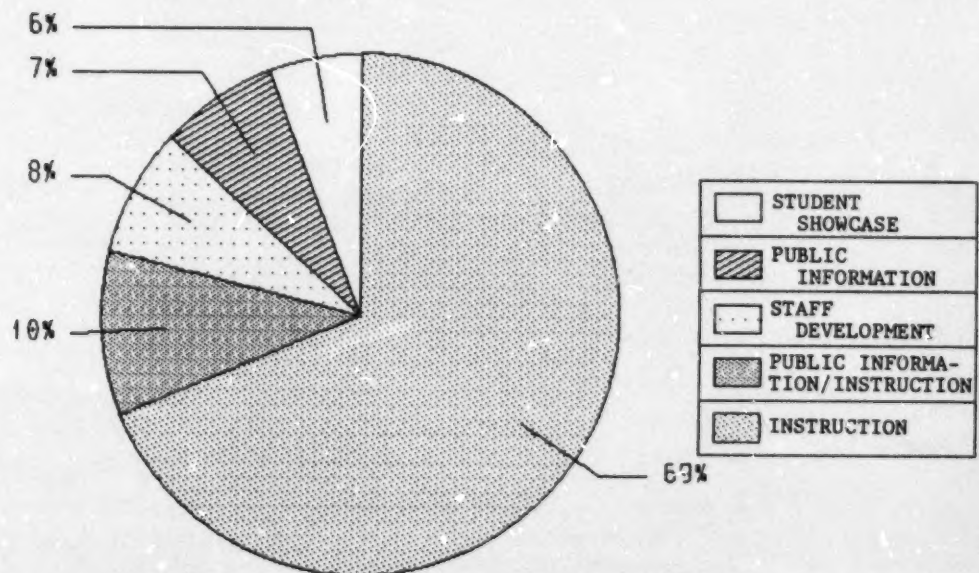
Student showcase, public information, and general educational and instructional programs are shown between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on weekends.

Programming guidelines are designed to be flexible enough to accommodate special requests. Instructional television programs to be shown on Cable 8 are selected based on recommendations of the Cable 8 Board of Directors and KLRU's Director of Instructional Television.

A review of Cable 8 schedules for the past year revealed that these guidelines have generally been followed with two exceptions. Instructional programs have been shown in the 4:30-6:00 p.m. time slot rather than guidance, staff development, and homework assistance programs at least half of the time. Program staff indicate that the supply of guidance, staff development, and homework assistance programs is insufficient to fill this time block. The other exception is that Zarabanda, a staff development show to teach Spanish, is shown during Chalkboard and instructional times. This scheduling has been done by request to make the program more accessible to staff.

A check of Cable 8 schedules also indicates that roughly two thirds of each programming day is devoted to instructional programming. Small portions of each programming day (6-10%) are devoted to public information, student showcase, staff development, and shows that serve both a public information and instructional purpose. Out of approximately two hundred programs shown each week, only about forty tend to be unique offerings. The station repeats programs several times to allow better accessibility of shows to the viewers.

USE OF PROGRAMMING DAY



WHO IS WATCHING CABLE CHANNEL 8?

The Cable 8 staff sees its primary audiences as AISD students, staff, parents, and the general public. Emphasis is placed on instructional use for students.

Survey results indicate that approximately 40% of the community, 50% of AISD parents, 70% of AISD teachers, and 80% of AISD administrators have watched Cable 8. However, most have only watched a few times.

Group	Percentage who Have Ever Watched Cable 8	
	Overall	With Cablevision in Home
Community (N=167)	39%	53%
Parents (N=519)	52%	60%
Teachers (N=170)	69%	81%
Administrators (N=177)	79%	93%

Figure 1. VIEWERS OF CABLE 8: Percentages of all those contacted who had ever watched Cable 8 ("Overall") plus the percentages of those with Cablevision in their homes who had watched.

Group	Frequency of Viewing (Percent)			
	Never	A few times	At least once a month	At least once a week
Community (N=227)	61%	21%	10%	8%
Parents (N=600)	48%	36%	7%	10%
Teachers (N=198)	31%	48%	9%	12%
Administrators (N=208)	21%	45%	14%	20%

Figure 2. CABLE 8: FREQUENCY OF VIEWING.

These charts illustrate several important points.

- About 40-50% of all Austin residents and AISD parents contacted reported having watched Cable 8 at least once. Figures suggest that roughly 50,000 households have tuned into the station at least once, with over 20,000 watching at least monthly. This is a sizable audience considering there are 23 Cable Channels in competition for viewers and Cable 8's schedule has limited distribution. Of course, this leaves 50 to 60% of AISD parents and community members who have never watched the station.

- Almost 80% of the administrators contacted reported watching Cable 8. However, most (45%) have watched only a few times; about 34% reported watching at least once a month.
- While nearly 70% of AISD teachers surveyed have tuned in to Cable 8 at least once, 30% have never watched. Most (48%) have watched only a few times; about 21% have watched at least once a month.

Community members, AISD teachers, and AISD administrators were asked how often they had watched Board meetings, announcements and notices, shows about AISD students and staff, instructional programs, Zarabanda, and training shows (AISD staff only). Findings revealed that:

- Viewers from all three groups were most likely to have watched Cable 8 only a few times.
- Community members were most likely to have watched shows about AISD students and schools and instructional programs. About one fourth of the respondents watched at least once a month. One third also said they tuned in to the announcements and notices at least once a month.
- Administrators were most likely to have watched Board meetings, shows about AISD, and announcements (about three fourths watched each, with 24-31% watching at least once a month). One fifth of the administrators watched instructional programs at least once a month.
- Teachers most frequently watched shows about AISD students and schools (66%). About half watched Board meetings, training shows, announcements, and instructional programs. Only 20% claimed to have watched any of the programs at least once a month (only 7% watched training programs monthly).

AISD staff were also asked how frequently they used Cable 8 programming for staff development or instruction of students.

- Administrators have used Cable 8 an average of two times for staff development purposes (with a range of zero to five times reported).
- Only one third of the teachers have used Cable 8 for instructional purposes. Most of these have used it only a few times.

Cable 8 does not appear to have reached its full potential either for use in staff development or instruction. Minimal instructional use seems particularly problematic given the station's instructional emphasis and the fact that two thirds of the programmed time is devoted to instruction.

WHAT DO VIEWERS THINK ABOUT PROGRAM QUALITY?

The quality of Cable 8 programs was most often rated "good." "Fair" was the next most common rating. Offerings are generally viewed favorably, but there is still room for improvement.

Program Type	Audience	Rating (%)			
		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Overall	Community (N=86)	12	57	27	4
	AIISD Administrators (N=175)	15	58	23	4
	AIISD Teachers (N=126)	5	51	37	7
	AIISD Parents (N=312)	7	57	33	2
Board meeting broadcasts	Community (N=37)	14	41	35	11
	AIISD Administrators (N=165)	21	64	13	2
	AIISD Teachers (N=102)	18	34	33	9
Announcements and notices	Community (N=47)	15	55	28	2
	AIISD Administrators (N=153)	12	63	20	5
	AIISD Teachers (N=103)	9	53	30	8
Shows about AIISD students and schools	Community (N=48)	42	44	10	4
	AIISD Administrators (N=152)	19	55	23	3
	AIISD Teachers (N=108)	11	40	32	18
Instructional programs	Community (N=45)	22	58	13	7
	AIISD Administrators (N=123)	12	56	27	5
	AIISD Teachers (N=106)	8	41	42	10
Zarabanda	Community (N=11)	27	36	27	9
	AIISD Administrators (N=69)	16	48	29	7
	AIISD Teachers (N=37)	11	19	46	24
Training shows	AIISD Administrators (N=117)	10	50	33	7
	AIISD Teachers (N=106)	3	21	47	29

Figure 3. RATINGS OF PROGRAM QUALITY BY VIEWERS OF CABLE 8. Respondents were simply asked to rate the quality of programs. No distinction was made between the quality of the content and the technical quality of the production.

A review of quality ratings reveals that:

- Community members gave their highest quality rating to shows about AISD students and staff.
- Administrators were the most likely of the three groups to rate program quality excellent or good. (All program types were rated excellent or good by 60-85% of the administrators.) Board Meeting broadcasts received the highest quality rating.
- Teachers were the most negative of any group about various programs' quality (with 38-76% rating quality as fair or poor). They rated the announcements and notices highest and training shows lowest in quality. Only one fourth of the teachers believed that training shows were of excellent or good quality.

HOW COULD USE OF THE CHANNEL BE INCREASED?

Program Schedules

Many potential viewers have never seen a Cable 8 schedule. Publication of the schedule in the Austin American-Statesman might significantly increase viewing.

Currently, one or two program schedules are distributed weekly to each AISD campus and to major offices. Schedules include only program names and occasional short descriptions of one or two highlighted programs. Most schools send one copy to their school library or post the schedule--some do both. Individuals can also call and ask to be placed on the mailing list. In addition, an index describing educational television programs, many of which are shown on Cable 8, was sent to each school library. The program schedule is currently not published in the Austin American-Statesman.

Most community members surveyed (88%) have never reviewed a Cable 8 schedule. Three fourths indicated they would be more likely to watch if the Cable 8 schedule were in the Austin newspaper.

Publication of the schedule in the newspaper would also help teachers and administrators. Only 41% of the teachers and 54% of the administrators surveyed believe schedule distribution is adequate at their school. About 25% of the teachers are not sure whether distribution is adequate, suggesting they probably do not know where a schedule is available to them.

Teachers indicated they would be more likely to use Cable 8 if:

- Program schedules matched their classroom schedules better.
- Video-cassette equipment was more readily available to record shows for later use.
- Each teacher received a schedule on a weekly basis.

Publishing the schedule in the Austin newspaper would improve teachers' accessibility to the listings. Other suggestions for improving teachers' knowledge of Cable 8 offerings include:

- Sending a newsletter to each teacher at least every fall indicating where Cable 8 schedules and program descriptions can be found and how to request that programs be shown at special times or on special dates.
- Creating and publicizing the availability of a videotape describing how Cable 8 programs can be used for instruction.
- Sending out notices of highlighted programs or series that could be used for instruction to be published in the Messenger and school newsletters and newspapers.

Use by teachers might also increase if librarians or Media Productions could be called upon to videotape shows on request. Better communication of offerings and increased use of the station will require a coordinated effort by Media Productions/Cable Television and District administrators at the central and school levels.

Program Offerings

Community members and teachers made suggestions about the type of programming they would like to see on Cable 8.

- Community members who had never watched Cable 8 preferred the addition of instructional and student showcase programs.
- Teachers at the elementary level favored additional programs in English language arts, science, and social studies more than mathematics.
- Secondary teachers thought computer literacy and English as a Second Language programs would be most helpful.

Teachers were also asked whether fifteen different programs would be valuable additions to Cable 8. All were supported by over half of the group with the exception of foreign-language films and news programs.

<u>Valuable Overall</u>		<u>Valuable to Use With Students</u>	
Discipline and learning— teacher and parent roles	77%	Computer literacy programs	70%
Study skills	77%	Short stories related to the curriculum	69%
Self-improvement	73%	Current event topics for discus- sion or essay writing	68%
Homework assistance	68%	Motion picture classics included in AISD curriculum	65%
What the schools teach	61%	Creative writing	63%
Programs about special education	58%	Student performances in music, speech, science, math, etc.	59%
The curriculum—local, state, and national	57%	Foreign-language films with subtitles	38%
		Foreign-language news programs	36%

ORE staff also made some programming suggestions.

1. Board Meeting agenda items could be announced before each meeting begins and major actions could be summarized at the end. A list of agenda items could also be included as part of the AISD Chalkboard.
2. Exemplary AISD teachers could be showcased by having lessons taped and shown on Cable 8. This would give parents and the public a chance to see what happens in the classroom. Some community school courses might also be taped to teach skills and publicize the program.

Members of the Board of Trustees have suggested that Cable Channel 8 could play a role in implementing Texas Education Code 21.101 by televising:

- Courses not available at all schools because of low enrollment;
- Courses for suspended students;
- Community school courses;
- Austin Community College telecourse programs;
- Tutoring at home with a call-in blackboard show;
- More shows communicating with parents.

ON WHAT CHANGES SHOULD CABLE 8 CONCENTRATE?

Overall, it appears Cable 8 is off to a good start. Many people have watched the Channel at least a few times, and most programs are considered to be of good quality. Cable 8 could still improve by:

- Increasing the number of regular viewers.
- Increasing the use of the channel for instruction.
- Increasing the use of the channel for staff development (and improving the quality of teacher training shows).
- Distributing program schedules and descriptions more widely.

The most important area for concentration is better communication of program offerings to all audiences. It does not matter how many programs are on if potential viewers do not know when to tune in. Publication of the schedule in the Austin American-Statesman and more direct communication of Cable 8 programming and services to teachers (through newsletters, videotapes, and principals) would both encourage increased use of Cable 8.

Reference

SYSTEMWIDE EVALUATION: 1983-84 Technical Report: Volume III Surveys and Records. Austin, TX: Office of Research and Evaluation (Publication No. 83.31), Austin Independent School District, June, 1984.

Appendix U provides complete procedures and results on the Cable 8 study.

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